

WASHINGTON, D.C. -Wednesday, Congressman Harry Teague successfully passed an amendment to ensure that the Veterans' Corps, established in the GIVE Act, will engage in activities that are important to veterans in southern New Mexico and across the country. Specifically, the amendment will aid veterans in their pursuit of educational and professional opportunities, help veterans with the claims process, and assist rural, disabled, and unemployed veterans with transportation needs. The Veterans Corps, was created to meet the unique needs of veterans and military families as a part of the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act, H.R. 1388, which passed today. Congressman Teague expects rural veterans and other veterans who must travel long distances for medical care will be the primary beneficiaries of his amendment.

The Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act, H.R. 1388, represents a renewed commitment to national service that gives Americans of all generations the opportunity to help get the country through the economic crisis by serving and volunteering in their communities. The GIVE Act could more than triple the 16,000 volunteers currently serving in New Mexico, and increase the education reward they receive to \$5,350 for next year, the same as the maximum Pell Grant scholarship award. The education award would also be linked to match future boosts in the Pell Grant scholarship in order to keep up with rising college costs. The House passed the legislation, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act, H.R. 1388, by a vote of 339 to 93. The Senate is also considering similar legislation. Full Text of Floor Statement Below:

M. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

(The clerk reports or reads aloud the amendment.)

M. Chairman, I rise today to offer an important amendment to an important piece of legislation, the GIVE Act. My amendment, which I am offering together with my friend Congressman Klein of Florida, establishes that a Veterans Volunteer Corps would engage in activities that are important to veterans in my district and across the country.

Those activities include:

- 1) Helping veterans pursue education and employment by coordinating with state and local agencies that administer education and jobs programs for veterans;
- 2) Helping veterans file benefit claims; and
- 3) Aiding rural, disabled and unemployed veterans with transportation needs.

This amendment is especially important for veterans in rural areas like the one I represent. Many veterans in my district have to travel four hours or more to reach a Veterans' Hospital for doctors' appointments. For folks who require constant medical care, the burden of this travel weighs heavily, on both the veteran and his or her family. Ensuring that a veteran can receive a helping hand for transportation needs through the GIVE Act will mean so much to men and women in Southern New Mexico and rural areas across the country.

Additionally, providing access to knowledgeable volunteers for veterans applying for their benefits can be a guiding light through the maze of the benefits application process. Veterans Service Organizations across the country already provide assistance like this at veterans' benefit centers, often on a volunteer basis. My amendment bolsters their critical service.

M. Chairman, this amendment invests in our veteran community while also allowing our veterans to invest in themselves and their fellow vets.

I thank my Chairman on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Congressman Filner, for his assistance and support on this amendment. And I thank Chairman Miller.

I RESERVE the balance of my time.

M. Chairman, I yield the remaining time to the cosponsor of the amendment, Congressman Klein.

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